TLS Newsletter

Important Dates

October 08-11:

Alaska Administrative Coaching Project, Anchorage.

October 13-15:

Alaska Principals' Conference, Anchorage.

October 21-22:

ACCESS for ELLs Assessment training and Data Discovery Workshop

Applause!

- **Special thanks goes to Lauri Bates & the Data Analysts for their work on the AMO worksheets.**

- **The Special Education Team for their work on the directors' meeting.**

We appreciate your great work!

The Work of TLS:

Preparing College, Career, and Culturally Ready Graduates

The upcoming issues of the TLS Newsletters will feature TLS programs and teams. You'll have a chance to learn more about the work they do to support schools and districts. This week the articles are about the Assessments team. In the next issue we will hear from the School Recognition and Support team.

Alaska's Comprehensive System of Student Assessments (CSSA)

The Assessments team ensures that every student in Alaska has the opportunity to demonstrate his/her knowledge, skills and abilities in a secure and positive testing environment. There are seven required assessments in our CSSA: ACCESS for ELLs, Alternate Assessment, Developmental Profile, High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, K-3 Literacy Screeners, Standards Based Assessment, and WorkKeys. If you'd like to know more about a particular assessment, and its purpose, please check out our webpage at http://education.alaska.gov/tls/assessment/home.html or come up to floor 3 to talk with us.

Our team facilitates trainings for district and school staff, provides support and assistance for all aspects of test administration, offers workshops for the use of the data, and supports districts in the event of a test security breach or violation. We also provide assistance to educators in the determination and provision of testing accommodations for students with disabilities and students who are English language learners.

Our work with C^3G is woven into all aspects of standards, assessments, and accountability. We work with EED's data analysts to inform districts about the changes to the school/district accountability system. We have also been working with districts to prepare them for the shift to new assessments based on the new Alaska standards; these standards provide the data for the accountability systems for schools, districts, and educators.

Technology Readiness Projects in Alaska

Alaska will administer new assessments in the spring of 2015; these assessments may be computer-based. No matter what direction Alaska goes in terms of a new assessment, the Assessments team wants to do our best to help districts and schools be as ready as they can be so that their students can be successful.

In order to make sound decisions regarding technology related educational issues, including the possible use of a computer-based assessment, EED needs current, accurate information about each school's hardware and internet connectivity. The Assessments team and the Technology team are collaborating with districts to gather this information. It is our goal to determine the current technology readiness of Alaska's schools and to be able to articulate what specific resources are needed at each school. Our current testing vendor, DRC, is working with us, and the following project is well underway.

The DRC Technology Readiness Assessment (TRA) Project

EED is working with our current assessment vendor, DRC, to provide a more in-depth assessment of each school's readiness. There are three parts to this TR assessment.

1. A Readiness Survey (using Survey Monkey): this will provide more detailed information than the TRT. This includes two tools that will provide information regarding *each machine* in a school: the local caching system and the load simulator tool.

- Local caching system (LCS): this is a system downloaded on to a desktop or a laptop computer that acts as a cache, or secure storage space, for the assessment. The benefit of a LCS is that it protects the experience of the student. If holds the assessment, and the student data, until the connectivity is solid enough to transfer the data.

- Load simulator: the load simulator tests each computer on which it is run as if a student is taking an assessment on that computer but does not require a student to sit at the computer and it takes only a few minutes. It simulates the data load for a typical student. When it runs simultaneously on all computers in the school it tests the entire system. Schools are asked to run this simulator at least 3 times: twice with the LCS and once without.

2. Interview: Each district will participate in an interview with DRC technology personnel to review results and diagnose issues.

3. Onsite Visit: A small number of districts with extreme issues will receive an onsite visit from DRC technology personnel to assist them in troubleshooting issues.

Each district will receive a custom report with their results; EED will also receive a statewide report. This will provide us with the information necessary to make recommendations and implementation plans for the administration of new assessments. As we receive this information, we will be updating a map on our website under the purple assessment star. A copy of the map and more detailed information can be found in the C^3G room.

For more on Technology Readiness contact Kari Quinto or Kelly Sorensen.

New Resource for Parents on the EED Website!

We recently added Parent Guides and Tips for the Alaska English Language Arts and Mathematics standards for each grade level on our website. We are also printing this publication for distribution to parents all over the state.

To see this new resource go to the yellow star and click on the Standards tab.

http://education.alaska.gov/akparentscommunity/

Each spring, approximately 114,000 secure test books are shipped across Alaska to our 54 school districts. Alaska's tests are kept secure so that students' scores are valid and reliable. If a test book was to go missing, we would have to discontinue that form of the test- a very expensive mistake.

The secure materials are shipped to district offices where an initial inventory is conducted. Using a mix of chartered flights, the post office, or hand delivery, all materials are then transported to school sites- if the weather cooperates.

Once the books arrive on site, they are inventoried again and secured and locked: in a vault, a keyed office, or even a locked filing cabinet. At each school site, materials are assigned to students and tracked by security numbers. Depending on grade level, there may be multiple test books per student.

Each test day materials are removed from locked locations and checked out to the test administrators (teachers and other staff working with students). At the conclusion of each testing session, test materials are counted to ensure each test book is present before being returned to the locked location.

When all testing at the site is completed, test materials are inventoried and sent back to district office. As materials arrive at the district office, they are inventoried a final time prior to packaging and being shipped back to the test vendor.

The vendor inventories the test booklets when they arrive before they are scored. This list is compared to the inventory of books sent out to districts. If a book is missing, the search begins!

Alaska's Comprehensive System of Student Assessment Calendar

- August– December: WorkKeys (Grade 11)

- September-November: Developmental Profile (kindergarten/grade 1)

- October: HSGQE Re-Test (Grade 11, 12, or returning adults)

- January-April: Alternate Assessment (for students with significant cognitive disabilities)

- January-March: ACCESS for ELLs (for students who are English language learners)

- April: SBA (grades 3-9); SBA-HSGQE (grade 10); HSGQE Re-test (grade 11, 12, returning adults); SBA Science
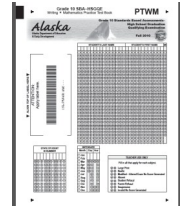
"Mr. Osborne, may I be excused? My brain is full."

Setting: Rural Alaska.

New high school student enrolls in small, one-teacher site one week before the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE) fall re-test. The student has transferred from another Alaskan high school in their senior year and needs to take and pass the HSGQE re-test in order to be eligible for graduation. This site did not have anyone who needed to take this test this fall, so there are no tests on location. The dedicated certified teacher calls the District Test Coordinator (DTC) and then arranges for the whole school to have a local sub. The certified teacher is trained via Skype and PowerPoint for proctoring and signs Test Security Agreement.

"All systems go. Fog, fog, fog. Oh my! Tuesday, no way to get test up to them. Wednesday, no way to get test up to them. Thursday, no way to get test up to them. Testing is next week!" The DTC checks on boat availability. Everyone is praying for good weather.

Friday, the DTC receives text from airline - "Break in wx. Can u lv in 5?" (Translation: break in weather. Can you leave in five minutes?).

"YES!!!!" DTC jumps on 207 small craft airplane and rides 30 minutes to the small village, with the box with the test inside on their lap to ensure it is secure at all times (of course! The DTC knows not to let that box out of their sight!) The Cessna 207 lands, the DTC places box on passenger seat of school truck that meets the plane, and locks truck door. The DTC, who is also the district Special Education Teacher, sees the parent of student at runway. Since the DTC is staying for the late afternoon pickup, the DTC takes this opportunity to chat with the parent about the upcoming IEP meeting, moose hunting, and life in general. The maintenance man loads the raft equipment into airplane for backhaul. The pilot waves, the DTC thanks the pilot, and the pilot taxies out. Finishing the conversation with the parent, the DTC goes to school truck and THE BOX IS GONE!!!

DTC (panic in voice) - "Where is that box I put here?"

Maintenance Man - "Oh, it said 'Important, Secure Testing Materials', so I thought it needed to go to District office right away."

DTC cries - "But wait!" The DTC watches as the beautiful airplane soars away with test box.

The maintenance man calls the pilot over the ground-air radio to *PLEASE* come back. The plane, with cargo and passengers, turns around to land and deliver the HSGQE (again).

Epilogue: the DTC arrives at work next morning to a present. The superintendent's assistant wrapped up a baby snuggly for use in test pick up to make sure all future test delivers stay attached to the DTC for sure.

FAQs

What happens if a school isn't able to administer a computer based assessment in 2015?

At this time Alaska has not committed to any particular assessment. We currently have an RFP out that will provide us with options. If we choose a computer based assessment for our new assessment in 2015, we know that there will be a small number of schools who are not able to administer this assessment, even with a longer testing window. A paper/pencil form will be available for these schools.

Vocabulary & Acronyms

CBA: Computer Based Assessment.

LCS: Local Caching System.

TRA: Technology Readiness Assessment.